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# U. S. SECURITY AGENTS TOLD: BURN FILES 20 Field Offices Sent Order

BY WILLARD EDWARDS  
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, Sept. 24 — The state department's security office has directed its agents in 20 major cities of the United States to destroy the bulk of their field office records, containing data on government security risks.

By Oct. 1, according to a directive dated Aug. 28, resident agents "will destroy all completed investigative reports by burning process with a special agent in attendance" as a witness.

The department's security agents investigate state department employees and applicants for employment to ascertain if they are loyal to their country, have communist connections, or have difficulties in character, such as drunkenness or homosexuality, which would make them potential security risks. They also investigate passport frauds.

## "Raw Files" to Go

The data to be destroyed will include not only copies of reports forwarded to Washington but what intelligence agents call "raw files." These include data useful in subsequent investigations such as names of prospective witnesses and leads to subversive activities.

A field agent has complained to his senator that the destruction of his records will seriously impair his usefulness in the future and hamper his inquiries into the background of state department employees.

Henceforth, under the order the agents will receive only the information which the office security in Washington sends them and they are forbidden to accumulate data for future use. All security records will be based in the Washington headquarters.

## Reported Under Pressure

The order to destroy records has come to the attention of the Senate internal security subcommittee, which has been investigating charges of lax security in the state department for

two years. Copious evidence has been assembled in executive hearings but the subcommittee is reported under White House pressure to suppress its finding until after the Nov. 3 election.

In issuing the order, the office of security asserted it was designed to effect efficiency and economy.

Altho it reduces the number of domestic field offices, no employee would lose his job, the directive said. However, resident agents, formerly equipped with clerical helpers, would be reduced to one desk, one chair, and one dictating machine.

## Taken From Agents

In ordering these resident agents to burn all their past investigative reports, the office of security headed by G. Marvin Gentile said that "current investigative assignments and files completed during the period between Nov. 6, 1962, and Jan. 1964," would be exempted. But this material was not to remain in the agents' possession.

"In this category, the investigative report, along with the agent's notes, securely stapled, are to be removed from the file storage cabinet and package for first class registered mailing . . . to the controlling special agent in charge," the order read.

"Resident agents will destroy all accumulated administrative material by burning with a special agent in attendance. . . . It is desired that resident agents destroy index cards by burning with a special agent in attendance.

## One Section Unexplained

"Field personnel files should be forwarded 'eyes only' [a top security classification] to the special agent in charge via first class registered mail."

Intelligence experts could offer no explanation for one section of the order which directed field offices to withdraw their listing from local telephone directories. It was presumed to reflect the hush-hush background of Gentile, who came to the office of security from the central intelligence agency. He succeeded John F. Reilly, who was forced to resign after the internal security subcommittee accused him of falsifying testimony.

The office of security maintains field offices in Boston, New York, Washington, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Resident agents operate in many cities under supervision of the field offices. In the midwest, there are agents in St. Paul, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Omaha, operating under the Chicago headquarters.

## No Future Records

These agents, especially veterans of many years' service, have accumulated filing cases full of data which they must now burn, with a witness looking on. They may keep no records in the future of their cases. They will dictate a report and send it to the field office which, in turn, will transmit it to Washington.

"He [the agent] will be operating out of his hat," commented an intelligence authority. "The new system is calculated to handicap investigative work, if nothing worse."

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